

WESTERN MARYLAND RAILROAD in POCAHONTAS

Durbin Branch

* "The Durbin branch of the Western Maryland Railway extends from Elkins in Randolph County, to Durbin and there connects with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad-Greenbrier Division. According to J. W. Broome, Superintendent, this branch was completed by the Coal and Iron Railway Company on August 1, 1903, and was purchased by the present owners on November 1, 1905. In Pocahontas County there are 17.62 miles of main track with 2.01 miles of sidings."

Spruce Branch

* "During 1928 the Western Maryland Railway Company purchased that portion of the Greenbrier, Cheat and Elk railroad beginning at Cheat Junction in Randolph County, and extending south along Shavers Fork to Spruce, where it turns west, crossing through the mountain passes between the headwaters of Tygart, Cheat and Elk Rivers, and then down Big Spring fork of Elk River to the village of Slaty Fork. From this point it extends northwestward down main Elk River, and passes into Randolph County at the mouth of Douglas Fork. This railroad is entirely of standard gauge, the principal function of which in previous years was a log carrier for the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company. This railroad will provide a general freight and passenger service in this territory, which also includes extensive coal deposits of eastern Webster, southern Randolph and northwestern Pocahontas Counties."

from--U. Va. Geological Survey- Paul Price-1929

Durbin branch

When the Coal and Iron railroad reached what is now West Durbin and the Chesapeake and Ohio what is now Durbin, both had their surveys through what is called the Narrows just above Durbin. Both roads were anxious to lay steel through the gap, but the C. and O. rushed a crew in one Saturday night in October 1902. Sunday saw intense activities and when evening came a flat car loaded with ties stood at the end of the steel. That is where the switch is located going into the Pocahontas Tanning Company siding at Frank, so the C. and O. got ahead of the Coal and Iron. They later extended their line to Winterburn. Both companies had been anxious to build into this section so as to open up the vast timber sections.

The Durbin branch of the Western Maryland Railroad of 17.62 miles extending from Durbin to the divide into Randolph County extended through one of the richest timber sections of the county. Lumber Companies came into this section as soon as the railroad was completed and the lumber towns of Wildell, Gertrude, May, Braucher, Madeline, Olive and Burner sprang up and flourished for about fifteen years. The land rose in value until it was worth something like \$5,000,000 for the timber alone, and now that the timber has been cut it is held at something like \$5.00 an acre for grazing. The Coal and Iron, what a vision of wealth and prosperity that name once conjured. But now the land has been stripped of its timber and the region now looks stern and wild and naked. At least seven post offices were allowed to lapse ^(all of them) and all of the churches were discontinued, and only one school, the Wildell school, was retained. Most of the land is now a part of the Monongahela National Forest.

West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company
Lumber Railroad--Pocahontas County

* "Certain portions of what was formerly the Greenbrier, Cheat and Elk Railroad was not included in the Western Maryland purchase and are now operated by the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company. This includes a branch from Slaty Fork extending around the eastern side of Gauley Mountain and entering Randolph County near the northern prong of Big Run, and another branch from Spruce southeastward across Back Allegheny Mountain, through a mountain pass 3,940 feet above sea level, down Leatherbark Run, to Cass where it connects with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. According to Charles W. Luke, Manager of the Company's operations at Cass, the branch extending from Slaty Fork to Randolph County on Gauley Mountain will be taken up after the timber has been removed from that area, but the branch connecting the Chesapeake and Ohio at Cass with the Western Maryland at Spruce will in the future be operated by the Lumber Company as a private railroad."

* From West Va. Geological Survey--P. Price
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